TOSS

REPAIR

KEEP

DONATE

RECYCLE

REPURPOSE

Your guide to eco-friendly decluttering

You're here for a reason.

Maybe it was the hour you spent rummaging through crowded drawers looking for a specific item and coming up empty-handed. Maybe it was the stack of boxes that you kept moving from one place to another. Maybe it was the avalanche you triggered as you tried—and failed—to remove a single piece of tupperware without knocking over the precarious stack.

Whatever the reason, you've come to this conclusion: you have too much stuff.

Staring down the overflowing drawers, cupboards and boxes, you've probably briefly considered just tossing it all in the trash and calling it a day. But if you're here, reading this guide, then the little voice in your head has probably already warned you that's not great for our planet.

The good news is, there's a way to deal with the items you no longer need without the guilt that can sometimes accompany decluttering. We created this guide with tips, a flowchart and some labels to help you get started.

Decluttering tips

SCALE YOUR PROJECT TO YOUR TIME AND ENERGY

Rome wasn't decluttered in a day. Break your decluttering project down into manageable chunks that match up with the time and energy you have available. You could start with a single drawer of clothes or one kitchen cupboard.

By accomplishing something small and doable first, you'll get a boost of confidence and be less likely to get overwhelmed. But if you've got the itch to spring clean and a whole afternoon set aside, be our guest and empty your entire wardrobe.

TACKLE IT SECTION BY SECTION

The best way to make sure nothing gets missed is to pull out a whole section, drawer or box at once. Items in the bottom of a drawer or tucked away in a closet are likely to keep gathering dust unless you bring them out into the light.

Sort through the items from that section and place them into a clearly labelled box or bag, depending on where they need to go. (This guide includes printable labels if you'd like to use them.) Don't start on another section until the first one is complete.

MAKE DECISIONS EASIER

Trying to decide what to do with an unwanted pair of jeans might not seem bad when there's just one pair, but repeat that process a few hundred times and you'll experience decision fatigue. This term describes the phenomenon of our decreasing mental ability to make decisions with each additional decision we make.

To help keep decision fatigue at bay, you can use the flowchart in this guide to help streamline the process. Taking breaks or coming back to the project after a good night's sleep also helps.

ADD SOME FUN

There's no getting around it - decluttering projects can take a lot of time. To keep the momentum going, try challenging a friend or adding an element of fun into the mix. Listening to an intriguing podcast, dancing along to some upbeat tunes or sipping on your favourite beverage while you work can elevate your decluttering from a little boring to surprisingly-kind-of-enjoyable.

DONATE

Options for unwanted items

TOSS IT

Most items that are thrown out end up in a landfill. This is the least ideal situation because your items can take years, if not decades, to decompose. Meanwhile our planet's limited resources must be used to manufacture new items to replace the ones thrown out.

RECYCLE IT

Many communities accept certain materials like paper, glass, metal and some types of plastic for recycling. This is a great option for items that are no longer useful. However, not all types of material can be recycled, so check what options are available where you live.
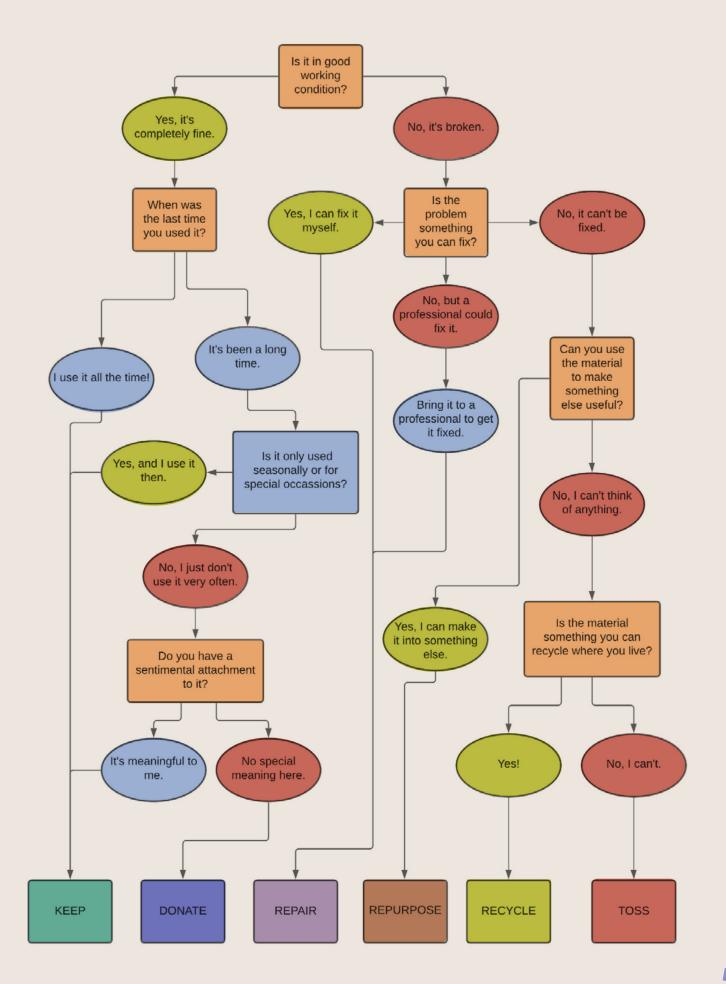
REPURPOSE IT

Just because something is broken doesn't mean it can't find a new purpose. Repurposing, or upcycling, is a fantastic way to use the material from an item. For example, with a little creative vision and some basic sewing skills, a pair of ripped-beyond-repair jeans can be repurposed into a tote bag, a scrunchie or even a purse.

REPAIR IT

By repairing any minor damage to your item, you're extending its life and keeping it out of the landfill for longer. You're also reducing the resources needed to manufacture new items. That's awesome! If you feel like repairing it yourself, watch tutorials on YouTube or check out instruction books from your local library. Otherwise, look up a local business that can repair your item.

DONATE IT

Clothing, books and other household items can be donated to your local MCC Thrift shop. We'll give those items new life and use the proceeds to meet basic human needs locally and around the world. It's a win-win! Visit **thrift.mcc.org** to find the location nearest you.

Is it in good working condition?

Yes, it's completely fine. → When was the last time you used it?

No, it's broken. → Is the problem something you can fix?

Yes, I can fix it myself.

No, it can't be fixed.

No, but a professional could fix it. → Bring it to a professional to get it fixed.

Can you use the material to make something else useful?

When was the last time you used it?
- I use it all the time!
- It's been a long time. → Is it only used seasonally or for special occassions?

Is it only used seasonally or for special occassions?
- Yes, and I use it then.
- No, I just don't use it very often. → Do you have a sentimental attachment to it?

Do you have a sentimental attachment to it?
- It's meaningful to me.
- No special meaning here.

No, I can't think of anything. → Is the material something you can recycle where you live?

Yes, I can make it into something else.

Is the material something you can recycle where you live?
- Yes!
- No, I can't.

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Box labels

To make this project a littler easier for you, we've included a few labels that you can print off on your home printer and stick on your boxes to help you stay even more organized.
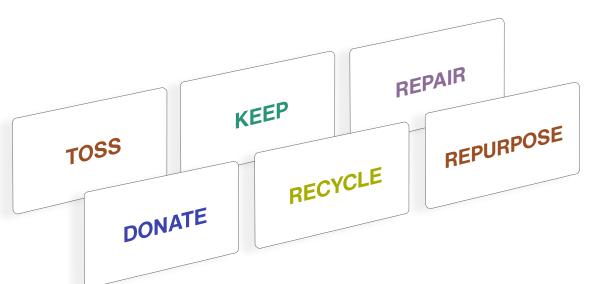
TO PRINT ON PLAIN PAPER:

1. Load your printer with white or coloured standard letter size paper (8.5" X 11").

2. Select the print option for this guide and select pages 7, 8 and 9 to print off the labels.

3. Press print.

4. Cut out the labels and affix to your boxes with any type of tape you have on hand.

5. Voila! Your labelled boxes are ready to go!

TO PRINT ON LABELS:

1. Load Avery 5126 labels (or another brand) into your printer.

2. Select the print option for this guide and select pages 7, 8, and 9 to print off the labels.

3. Hit print and affix your fancy new labels to your boxes!

Download the Avery template from
https://www.avery.com/templates/5126

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MCC THRIFT 50 YEARS

1972–2022

Have a decluttering tip that you don't see here? Let us know on Instagram by tagging @MCCThrift. And if you use the labels in this guide, take a picture and tag us, we'd love to see it!

MCC Thrift is a network of more than 85 thrift shops throughout Canada and the United States. Find your nearest location here.

thrift.mcc.org